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Editor's Page

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EDITOR'S PAGE

The *National Coal Issue* is but one of many symbols evidencing the national realization that America needs coal. It is ironic that Appalachia, victimized by a tarnished national image which was created, and is constantly exploited by the major television networks and news reporting services, is now the keystone in America's solution to its current energy predicament. With this in mind, it seemed only proper that the *West Virginia Law Review* (whose home state has shouldered a disproportionate share of Appalachia's tarnished national image) should become the home of a publication dedicated as a forum for national debate of those issues critical to the survival and growth of the coal industry. It is the pursuit of this goal which has established the *National Coal Issue* as a truly unique and practical publication.

Because of the *National Coal Issue's* instant success as an annual publication, and because of its need to serve an ever growing number of readers, several administrative changes were mandated this year. In addition to expanding to a co-editor organizational scheme, this year marked the creation of the *National Coal Issue* Staff, which consisted of both second and third year members of the *West Virginia Law Review* and whose purpose was to aid in the often tedious editorial process. This year's expansion has helped to ease some of the recent growing pains suffered by the *National Coal Issue*, and has allowed us to return to our normal publication schedule. As a result of some broader administrative changes affecting the entire *Review*, most of the students' legal writing projects have been shifted from the second to the third year. While this change in procedure allows students to first develop editing skills (and thus improve their own writing skills) before embarking on a major legal writing effort, it is the chief reason for the lack of student material in this year's *National Coal Issue*. The lack of student material then, is not a change of policy but the product of a transition period.

This year's *National Coal Issue* focuses on Federal Black Lung litigation and Mining Health and Safety, both associated with many critical issues involving law and social policy. Having had primary responsibility for the planning and coordination of the Black Lung Symposium, I would like to introduce the Symposium and describe its origin and purpose. A similar prefatory note precedes the Mine Health and Safety articles.

In talking with many persons, including especially those members of the National Coal Issue Advisory Board, it seemed that the area of the law dealing with the compensation of those suffering from coal workers' pneumoconiosis was ripe for debate. This was so, both because of its dynamic and controversial nature and because so many felt that a "lawyer's handbook" to Federal Black Lung litigation would be a great aid. The purpose then, of the Symposium, is multi-faced. It will hopefully (1) serve as a "lawyer's handbook" (2) provide a succinct overview of the Black Lung area and thus clear up many common misconceptions, and (3) raise new issues, the resolution of which might add even more clarity to this area of law.

With this goal in mind, select articles were chosen from the medical, administrative, claimant, defense, and academic perspectives, with a view toward achieving truly balanced debate. These goals have been achieved primarily through the time and effort of the contributing authors. Additionally, John Dorsey, Tom Rubenstein, Mary Rich Lewis, John Shirley, and Wray Voegelin, members of the *National Coal Issue* Staff whose talents I was fortunate to have at my disposal, dedicated untold hours of effort to the publication of this Symposium. I am indebted to each of them for their outstanding contributions. Indeed, with their aid, and the support of the entire *Law Review* Staff, it has been my privilege to serve as an editor of the *National Coal Issue*.

The coal industry is burdened with many problems, of both an internal and external nature, deterring its ability to effectively meet America's energy needs. While the problems are generally identifiable; identifying their sources, and to a greater extent, the solutions, is a more difficult task. In continuing its attempts to identify the sources of problems plaguing the coal industry, and in offering various solutions to these problems, the *National Coal Issue* not only serves the great Appalachian area, but America as well.

Larry W. Blalock